

Dear Instructional Quality Commission, While appreciating the interest of "South Asia Faculty Textbook Committee" towards ensuring veracity of the framework, we note several systemic defects in their recommendations. Several eminent scholars and common people have voiced their opposition to their "Area studies" narrative: for example, see <https://www.change.org/p/concerned-indians-statement-on-hypocrisy-and-indian-history> . We would like to specifically highlight our objection to some of their recommendations:

- The de-hinduification and South-Asia-ification of the framework.
 - We caution that the "South Asia Studies Faculty Review" has an obvious vested interest in promoting the increased use of the term "South Asia" (the brand their academic discipline goes by) at the cost of the more familiar and accurate references to the people and culture involved - in particular those pertaining to the Hindu residents of California.
 - Indeed this "South-Asia-ification" effort is an assault of Hindu identity and self-image, as discussed below.
 - The end result of this effort is that Hindu children will have a harder time relating themselves to their forefathers in the Gupta, Maurya and Vedic ages, despite being the proximate inheritors their culture.
 - The attempt to separate Tamil from the north Indian culture, and then postulating that the "Hindu" term is inadequate is deeply concerning - it reminds us of the colonial "divide and rule" policy.
 - Effacement of the "Hindu" term is equivalent to saying that simply because Hinduism is not made in the mold of Abrahamic religions and does not have a dogma and a central cannon, its ancient age and continuity may be questioned.
 - Just because there was no notion of "gravitational force" a million years ago, it does not mean that the gravitational force did not exist. Even by this rather strange logic, it is ridiculous to state that the term "Hindu" or "India" is less appropriate than the term "South Asian" since "South Asian" is of even more recent provenance.
 - Hinduism, which in the current parlance, refers to all native Indian pagan traditions - excluding traditions such as Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism according to some people, but not according to others. This will naturally include ancient Tamil and Indus valley religious traditions.
 - It is clear (since at least the time of 3rd century BCE book Indica by Megasthenes that Ancient India encompasses all regions referred to by the term "South Asia". Hence, recommendations such as "p. 265 Replace "India" on lines 729 and 731 with "South Asia" and "We recommend changing the Title of this Section to "The Early Civilizations of South Asia."" should not be accepted.
 - In light of the above, some of the purported benefits of the "South Asian" usage do not hold up from our perspective. For example -
 - While we wholeheartedly welcome mentioning (say) the Tamil classical tradition apart from the Sanskrit one, we object to the insinuation that Tamil classical tradition is not a Hindu tradition, which is evident in statements such as "In holding that Hinduism (and by extension, the Vedas, and Sanskrit) provides the definitive template for teaching about ancient South Asia, students may be disadvantaged from a more scientific approach to understanding the IVC, diverted from learning more about other classical traditions, such as the Tamil one". Nay, Tamils have since ages immemorial identified with the broader Hindu culture. For

- example, the vedic sage Agastya is said to have chaired the earliest Tamil Sangam (literary conferece).
- We find no basis for the notion that the use of the terms “Hindu” and “India” “productively connecting the Aryan peoples to Central Asian societies (for example, by comparing the Rg Veda to the Avesta of the Zoroastrians)”.
 - The "South Asia Studies Faculty Review" is itself inconsistent and selective in its replacement of the terms "Hindu" and India with other terms including "South Asian" (which illustrates the inherent difficulty of their de-hinduification project). For example, contrast their recommendations:
 - "We recommend deleting “Hindu background” from this sentence, “Through the story of his life, his Hindu background, and his search for enlightenment, students may learn about his fundamental ideas: suffering, compassion, and mindfulness.” The Buddha was a member of the Sakya clan; nothing called Hinduism existed at this moment in time"
 - "Replace with, “Although Buddhism waned in the Indian subcontinent in the late first millennium CE as the result of a resurgence of Hindu tradition, vibrant Buddhist communities still thrive in India, Nepal, and Bhutan.”"
 - Deemphasis of harmony and cultural unity among native Hindu traditions (including buddhism and jainism).
 - Islam is not presented as lacking a cultural unity due to its various sects. Christianity is not presented as in fact not being Christianity but rather a conglomerate of various denominations with opposing beliefs. Why this irrational need for complex academic arguments to single out and deny Hinduism a unified existence?
 - We object to the proposed removal of the bold text in “Many of the central practices of Hinduism today, including home and temple worship, yoga and meditation, rites of passage (samskaras), festivals, pilgrimage, respect for saints and gurus, and, above all, **a profound acceptance of religious diversity**, developed over this period.” The suggested justification is that was much internal conflict and persecution during the Vedic Period which lead to the emergence of Jainism and Buddhism. Though internal conflict did exist and though there were very rare (obviously exaggerated) tales of persecution, they are more the exception than the norm. In the history of many other world religions, it would be very unusual to find the very same ruler supporting diverse and competing religious traditions (Chola and Gupta support for Buddhism as well as Hinduism), to find rulers of the very same dynasty shifting their personal preference from one generation to the next (For example in the Maurya dynasty, Chandragupta went with Jainism, Ashoka with Buddhism), to find poets and philosophers (such as Kshemendra and Abhinavagupta) respecting both the Buddha and the Hindu deities. All this was common in the Hindu context. Furthermore, this undermines some of the fundamental universal tenets of Hinduism, such as “ekam sad viprah bahudha vidanti” (The single truth is known differently by different sages). Further, our note below illustrates the fact that several Hindu, Buddhist and Jain sources distinguish the cultural other (mleccha-s) from ancient Indian people - this points to a certain feeling of unity that existed among these suggestions. We note that this attempt to deemphasize the religious liberal attitude is connected to what is called the “Negationist’s second front” in Koenraad Elst’s work ([here](http://koenraadelst.bharatvani.org/books/negaind/ch2.htm) - <http://koenraadelst.bharatvani.org/books/negaind/ch2.htm>), which examines several facts relevant to the issue.

- We strongly object to the recommendation to delete in Pg. 262, lines 709-10, “Even though India was not unified into one state, nor did its people belong to a single religion, the entire area was developing a cultural unity.” The cultural unity of India is apparent in Indian literary works which describe various regions and customs of India (take Kalidasa’s Raghuvamsha or the Mahabharata as prominent examples). Further, there was a clear notion of the cultural other (called mleccha-s) is apparent in mideval works- Skandapurāṇa, Rājataranṅī, Somadeva-sūri’s texts, Kathāsaritsāgara 18 ([Wikisource](#)), Bilhaṇa’s Kaṇṇasundarī, the Kālacakra-tantra etc.. To add to this, there was a clear (though not static) notion of what constituted the “Āryāvarta” or the land of the cultured people. All this points to a sense of pan-Indic cultural unity. Please see “Nationalism: Its Theory and Principles in India” by Parmanand Parashar for further details and references.
- Islamic apologetics
 - We strongly object to the proposed replacement of the sentence: “Anti-Western violence perpetrated by the followers of a fundamentalist version of Islam has contributed to the appearance of deep conflict between the Islamic and Western worlds, especially since 9/11. Students should learn about the roots of modern Islamic extremism by reading a variety of sources from Egyptian writers and the Muslim Brotherhood, for example” with something more beneficent to Islam and maleficent to Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism. It is a matter of fact that most anti-western violence in recent times is Islamic in origin (far more than those originating in Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism). The attempt to hide this fact smacks of partisanship and mendacity.
- Other minor inaccuracies
 - With regards to the following recommendation: “We recommend changing “Telagu” to “Telegu” pg. 211, line 819”, we note that Telugu is the right spelling (in conformance with the native reference to the language - తెలుగు).

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